

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY AIRCRAFT IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 192915 TOSEC 200003

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 4064 ACTION SECSTATE 04 AUG 1976

QUOTE S E C R E T AMMAN 4064

NODIS

DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE SY JO XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING--SITUATION IN LEBANON AND SYRIA

1. I SAW KING HUSSEIN MORNING AUGUST 4 FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION BEFORE DEPARTING AMMAN FOR TEHRAN. GOOD PORTION OF OUR TALK CONCERNED LEBANON AND SYRIA

2. I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO THANK KING FOR HIS PREVIOUS REPORTS AND TO TELL HIM THAT OUR ATTITUDE AS CONVEYED IN MESSAGE LAST MONTH FROM YOU TO HIM REMAINED UNCHANGED.

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3. KING SAID THAT HE HAD ONLY TWO NEW ITEMS TO PASS ON TO YOU. ONE CONCERNED THE ARRIVAL IN LEBANON OF SOME 60 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT FROM LIBYA AND THE OTHER INDICATED INCREASED NUMBERS OF IRAQIS COMING INTO THE COUNTRY. I TOLD KING IN RESPONSE THAT WE HAD SOME INDICATIONS OF FORMER ACTIVITY.

3. KING THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT ASAD CONTINUES TO REMAIN IN TOUCH AND CONTINUES TO REFLECT PRESSURE ON HIM OVER LEBANESE SITUATION. KING WAS GENERAL AND NOT SPECIFIC. BUT SAID ASAD CONTINUES TO REITERATE TO HIM THE NEED FOR JORDAN AND SYRIA'S FRIENDS TO UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUS REALITIES OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN LEBANON. AGAIN THE KING WAS NOT SPECIFIC BUT HE IMPLIED TO ME THAT ASAD'S ALLUSIONS ARE VERY MUCH TO SOVIET PRESSURE.

4. THE KING ASKED ME WHETHER OUR REPORTS TENDED TO AGREE WITH WHAT HE HAD AND WITH WHAT THE SYRIANS HAD. WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, I TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS HARD TO SAY WE HAD CONFIRMATION OF MUCH OF WHAT HE HAD PASSED ON FROM INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO ME PERSONALLY. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE ABOUT DIRECT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT BUT I CAUTIONED HIM THAT HE MIGHT NOT HAVE THE FULL PICTURE.

5. KING SAID THAT MUCH OF THE INFORMATION WAS COMING FROM COMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTS AND HE HAD BECOME VERY DISTRUSTFUL OF THAT SOURCE. HE SAID THAT IT WAS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE FOR A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION TO BE PLANTED THIS WAY.

6. I ASKED THE KING ABOUT THE GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE IN SYRIA. HE SAID THAT ASAD HAD SPOKEN TO HIM SOME MONTHS AGO ABOUT THE NEED FOR CHANGE. KING MADE CLEAR THIS WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS OWN CHANGES IN JORDAN WHICH WERE THEN ALSO BEING CONTEMPLATED.

7. ASAD, KING SAID WAS SOMEWHAT UNHAPPY WITH AYYUBI,
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HAVING CALLED HIM A GOOD PEACETIME PRIME MINISTER BUT WITH NO SENSE OF INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS. KING ALSO SAID THAT AYYUBI HIMSELF WAS UNHAPPY ABOUT SOME OF PEOPLE AROUND ASAD, SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING ASAD'S BROTHER RIF'AT.

8. KING CONCLUDED THAT CHANGES IN SYRIA CAME ABOUT BECAUSE OF ASAD'S CONCERN OVER THE INTERNAL SECURITY

SITUATION (KING SAYS THERE HAVE BEEN REAL PROBLEMS IN THAT AREA), FAILURE OF SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUFFICIENT ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR POPULATION AND BECAUSE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAD GROWN TIRED AND SOMEWHAT LAX IN OFFICE AND WAS UNSUITED TO THE DEMANDS PLACED ON IT BY THE SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON.

9. KING THEN ALSO SAID THAT AHMED SHUKAIRY WAS BEING PROMOTED BY THE LIBYANS AS A STALKING HORSE IN THE ARAB WORLD TO GENERATE CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT PLO LEADERSHIP. SHUKAIRY UNBEKNOWNST TO THE EGYPTIANS WAS TO BE TOLD TO THEM BY LIBYANS THROUGH SAUDI ARABIA AS A MEANS OF PLACING PLO PRESENT LEADER SHIP BY DRUMMING UP POPULAR PALESTINIAN SUPPORT IN THE REGION FOR SUCH A STEP. SYRIA WOULD ALSO BE SOLD THE SAME THESIS AND BE ASKED TO PROMOTE A MEETING BETWEEN SHUKAIRY AND JORDANIANS PALESTINIANS IN THE EAST AND FOR THE SAME PURPOSE.

10. KING SAID HE IS ADAMANTLY AGAINST SUCH A MOVE AND HAS WARNED ASAD ABOUT THE PROPOSAL. AS FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED SHUKARIY IS ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE IN ANY CONTEXT ALTHOUGH KING STILL HOPES THAT SOME NEW LEADERSHIP CAN EMERGE AMONG THE PALESTINIANS, PARTICULARLY IN THE WEST BANK.

11. KING SUMMED UP HIS FEELING ABOUT FUTURE PEACE MOVES IN THE AREA BY TELLING ME THAT (A) IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE FOR JORDANIANS TO TRY TO MOVE AHEAD NOW SEPARATELY, IT WOULD ONLY PROVIDE A CLOAK OF TRUTH TO THE PRESENT CHARGES THAT THE UNITED STATES, ISRAEL, JORDAN AND SYRIA HAVE ALL CONCLUDED
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TO DESTROY THE PALESTINIANS AND REPLACE THEM WITH JORDAN (B) KING BELIEVES OVER LONG RUN PEACE SETTLEMENT MUCH INCLUDE ALL AREAS OF CONFRONTATION AND THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE FOR PALESTINIANS ALTHOUGH HE SEEMS NOW MORE INTERESTED IN SEEING THIS TAKE PLACE IN A CHANGED CONTEXT IT WOULD EVOLVE OUT OF PRESSURES BEING EXERTED ON PRESENT PALESTINIANS LEADERSHIP IN LIBYA BY SYRIA AND OTHERS. HE CLEARLY DOES NOT EXCLUDE HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN SOME "EVOLVED SITUATION" BUT WITH CAVES THAT IT MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO OTHER ARABS AND IN THE CONTEST OF A PEACE WHICH STIMULATES RATHER THAN INHIBITS PROGRESS.

12. FINALLY KING ASKED ME TO EXTEND HIS BEST WISHES

TO YOU AND TO EXPLAIN TO YOU PERSONALLY HIS PRESENT
THOUGHTS AND IDEAS. EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI WHO
WAS ALSO AWARE OF HIS CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE KING
OF MY VISIT TO YOU ALSO ASKED ME TO PASS ON HIS
RESPECTS AND BEST WISHES.

13. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT PASS DAMASCUS.
PICKERING UNQUOTE HABIB

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